



AS THESE MEN THOUGHT IN 1938, in the Soviet party member thinks today. They are (from left) Stalin, the ruthless Chairman Lenin, the brilliant orator and theorist Marx, and Trotsky. The last two were never members of the party. When this picture was taken, Trotsky was relatively obscure but was already a powerful follower of the party's importance. General Director of the Comintern, Alexei Leonov's death, he consolidated his control of the party and liquidated his enemies.

SOVIET CONDUCT (CONTINUED)

other phases of Soviet economic life, particularly agriculture, economy, agriculture, production, marketing and transportation.

To all that the war has added the tremendous toll of destruction, death and human exhaustion. In consequence of this, we have in Russia today a society which is physically and spiritually exhausted. The bulk of the people are dispirited, skeptical and no longer as accessible as before to propaganda of the sort of authority which Soviet power still relates to its followers abroad. There are limits to the physical and nervous strength of people themselves. These limits are absolute ones and are binding even for the most determined dictators, because beyond them people cannot be driven. The forced labor camps and the other agents of punishment provide temporary means of compelling people to work longer hours than their own will or even reasonable pressure would dictate, but if people survive them at all they become old before their time and must be considered as human casualties to the demands of dictatorship. In either case their best powers are no longer available to society and can no longer be enlisted in the service of the state.

Meanwhile a great uncertainty hangs over the political life of the Soviet Union. That is the uncertainty involved in the transfer of power from one individual or group of individuals to others.

This is, of course, outstandingly the problem of the personal position of Stalin. We must remember that his succession to Lenin as a pinnacle of pre-eminence in the Communist movement was the only such transfer of individual authority which the Soviet Union has experienced. That transfer took 12 years to consolidate. It cost the lives of millions of people and shook the state to its foundations. The attendant tremors were felt all through the international revolutionary movement, to the disadvantage of the Kremlin itself.

But this is not only a question of Stalin himself. There has been, since 1938, a dangerous concentration of political power in the higher circles of Soviet power. The All-Union Party Congress, in theory the supreme body of the party, is supposed to meet not less often than once in three years. It will soon be eight full years since its last meeting. During this period membership in the party has more than doubled. Party mortality during the war was enormous, and today well over half of the party members are persons who have entered since the last party congress was held. Meanwhile the same small group of men has satiated on the top.

Who can say whether, in these circumstances, the eventual re-creation of the higher spheres of authority (which can only be a matter of time) can take place smoothly and peacefully, or whether rivals in the quest for higher power will not eventually reach down into these politically immature and inexperienced masses in order to find support for their respective claims? If this were ever to happen, strange consequences could follow for the Communist party; for the membership of large has been exercised only in the practices of iron discipline and obedience and not in the arts of compromise and accommodation. If consequently anything were ever to occur indicating the unity and efficacy of the party as a political instrument, Soviet Russia might be plunged overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies.

It is curious to note that the ideological power of Soviet authority is strongest today in areas beyond the frontiers of Russia, beyond the reach of its police power. This phenomenon brings to mind a comparison used by Thomas Mann in his great novel *Buddenbrooks*. Observing that human institutions often show the greatest

